



# DENTAL AWARENESS MONTH

From candy apples to candy canes... the “sweet tooth” is sure to be satisfied these next few months of trick or treat “loot” and holiday goodies. Although it is fine to indulge in some treats, sweets and sugars can lead to a mouth full of cavities. That has dentists hoping to hook their patients on brushing and flossing. Dr. Ed Zapert sees youngsters at the Leon County Health Department’s Center for Dental Health and Prevention ((please link to this web site: <http://www.co.leon.fl.us/LCPHU/Dental/index.asp>)). He hopes they develop good dental habits early in life.

“Dental hygiene is where it all starts. If you have strong dental hygiene habits then you will have fewer problems”.

Each year, The American Dental Hygienists’ Association (ADHA) ((please link to this web site: <http://www.adha.org/>)) sponsors the month. 2005’s theme explores how tobacco use can lead to the increased prevalence of heart disease, and how these are linked to oral health. Traditional messages, focusing on the importance of daily oral care and good nutrition are also part of the celebration of shiny smiles.

Organizers are urging everyone to mark the month with some early New Year’s resolutions including:

- Brushing, flossing, and rinsing daily
- Scheduling regular oral health check-ups to remove plaque
- Choosing an overall eating plan aimed at building/maintaining health gums

What you put into your mouth and chew on and when you do it can either help or hinder tooth decay. Some foods increase saliva, lower the acid levels, and actually start cleaning your teeth as you are chewing.

- Cheese
- Lean protein
- High-fiber fruits and vegetables
- Sugar-free chewing gum

But sugar free gum is not the only thing you can munch on from that Halloween candy bag. Dr. Zapert says you can indulge every once in awhile but, treat your teeth to a good brushing or else the trick will be on you.

“It is OK to eat a few pieces if you brush soon afterward. Leaving the sugary taste in your mouth will lead to plaque. That is when you start getting into trouble.”

The Health Department’s clinic is located next door to the old train station on Railroad Avenue. It was designed to meet the dental needs of less fortunate children and young adults ages six through twenty. Dentists work towards the goal of helping their patients achieve the best possible dental health. The clinic hours are:

Monday-Friday 8am-5:00pm  
Saturday & Sunday closed  
Appointments call 850-487-3144



Division of Health Education

